

Introduction and Roles/Responsibilities

The responsibility of an elected fire board- Commissioners are community representatives whose duties include:

- Setting the annual budget and tax levy
 - Approving policies, plans, and priorities for the district
 - Hiring and evaluating the Fire Chief
 - Overseeing major purchases, facilities projects, and long-range planning
 - Ensuring transparency and accountability to the public
 - Advocate for the District with elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels
- Their decisions shape everything from response capabilities to training, equipment, and community risk reduction efforts.

Our board has been elected but does not receive a monthly payment or benefits. Many districts have payment and benefits in place.

The Fire Chiefs Responsibility- A Fire Chief serves as the top executive, operational, and strategic leader of a fire department, responsible for overall management, emergency scene command, and community safety. Key duties include directing fire suppression, developing policies, managing budgets, training personnel, and Ensuring compliance with laws.

Key Responsibilities of a Fire Chief:

- **Operational Leadership:** Acts as the highest-ranking officer, commanding at the scene of major fires and incidents.
- **Administration & Management:** Oversees day-to-day operations, including personnel, apparatus, and station maintenance. All done by me as we do not have administrative assist.
- **Strategic Planning & Policy:** Develops and implements department policies, procedures, and long-term goals for community fire protection.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Prepares, manages, and monitors the departmental budget.
- **Training & Safety:** Ensures staff receive adequate training and maintain safety standards to prevent injury to firefighters and citizens.

- **Community Relations:** Interacts with local government and the public.

Physical and Mental Demands

The role requires the ability to make high-pressure, critical decisions in chaotic environments. It often involves managing heavy work, including lifting and navigating dangerous environments.

The Island Firefighter's- Our firefighters are either retired or work at another fire district within Lee County or Collier County. These firefighters work a 24-hour shift at their full-time fire district and then come here to work another 24-hour shift at their part time job. We have 35-40 part-time firefighters who work on island 1-6 shifts a month. On any given day you will have 45-60 years of combined experience. All firefighters are properly trained and competent.

We are a non-transport Advanced Life Support (ALS) department. Which means we have the knowledge, experience and equipment to treat all medical and trauma calls. Lee County EMS are responsible for transport.

Potential Calls-

Minor injuries to major traumatic injuries. Medical calls range from respiratory, cardiac arrest, stroke or general medical issues.

Structure fires, smoke investigation, alarm activations, or odor investigations.

We have an airstrip where in the 20 years I have been here we have had 2 plane crashes and one helicopter crash. Operating emergency procedures on an airstrip require specialized training which I have 3 firefighters who have these credentials.

State land and empty lots pose a wild land fire concern if not properly maintained. Operating in a wild land fire also requires specialized training the majority of the firefighters are trained in this modality.

Water rescue: we do not have a water rescue boat because we do not have the manpower to operate it daily. The cost of operating and maintaining a vessel is extensive. What we do provide is what is called shore command where we will operate from the shoreline for the responding marine vessels. We can provide

updates via radio of the ongoing incident. I have utilized island residents and their boats for emergencies where I believe we could assist several times over the last 3 years. Operating a vessel in emergency situations requires specialized training along with water rescue. All firefighters would need additional certifications to enter the water to provide surf rescue.

We also interact with and assist island residents and visitors with public assistance. This can range from assisting a person down the stairs to wrapping an ankle that was injured or applying a band aid to a small cut on a finger. We do not call dispatch to record or generate a call for these minor interactions simply because they are non-emergent.

Introduction of Jesse J Cottrell- Many know my name but may not know my life history so here ya go. Born in Warren, Ohio and my family relocated to Florida when I was 2. I grew up in Pinellas County. My early adult life, from age 14-28, I worked in the restaurant industry holding every role from dishwasher to General Manager. This is where I groomed my well received customer satisfaction. I am married and then had a small child, so I wanted to be able to provide a stable home environment for them. I decided to change careers. I tested at a local vocational school to see what someone like me would excel at. The test pointed me into the Fire/EMS service. I completed my schooling and was immediately hired at the hospital and I performed my clinicals as an ER Tech. While employed as an ER Tech, I continued to apply at the local fire districts. I tested many times, but this was the era of Paramedic preference. Since I was an EMT, the hospital agreed to pay for my education for paramedic school. I started paramedic school which was 13 months long. While in school, Desoto County Fire Rescue was looking for firefighters as one of my classmates was employed there. I applied and was offered a position with them. I worked for Desoto for 11 months but had tested with Bonita Springs almost 2 years earlier. My phone rang at the end of 2003, and they were offering a position. I accepted immediately and relocated my family to Cape Coral. In 2006 Upper Captiva Fire Rescue was looking for part-time employees. Chief Richard Pepper hired me, and I worked both my fire jobs until my retirement from Bonita Springs in August 2025. I did this to dedicate my time and effort to this island. Being in this field as long as I have, I have realized we do not do it for money or glamour. It takes a special individual to show up on your worst day and try to help you make sense of it all. I am here doing this job to help protect this island. My goal will be to leave the fire district in a much better place than I found it.